**Course Guide for General Psychology   
Open Course Library   
Description of Resources and Assignments for Instructors  
July 2011**

**Textbook choices and comparison**

Three textbooks have been keyed to this course outline. Select one for your course. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. The relative benefits of each for this course are described here. Each is available in eBook and hard copy form. The order reflects my preference for use.

1. Myers, D. G. (2011). Exploring Psychology, 8th ed. Worth Publishers, New York. 570 pages plus 34 pages in three appendices. In eBook including the Psych Portal web site: $30. Hardcopy cost an additional $92 in paperback, $98 in hardback. A loose leave version will be available soon for less cost.
2. Griggs, R. A. (2012). Psychology, 3rd ed. Worth Publishers, New York. 403 pages. In eBook form on CourseSmart web site, plus Psych Portal web site resources. $28. Paperback copy costs an additional $37.
3. Stangnor, C. (2011) Introduction to Psychology, Flat World Publishers. NY: Irvington. 484 pp. Ebook version is free; paper copy around $40. Creative Commons Licensing for sharing and re-mixing. Available here: <http://www.savingstudentsmoney.org/FWK/>

The **Myers *Exploring Psychology*** has a long history of use and acclaim for David Myers’s writing style and description of psychology’s research processes. The Psych Portal offers a wealth of resources including over 100 video clips keyed to chapters, sample quizzes for each chapter, study aids such as flash cards, interactive exercises and critical thinking topics keyed to each chapter. It also affords the instructor the Angel platform for organizing the course online. This includes the testing program with online multiple choice testing. The instructor can order different quizzes for each student, retakes of each chapter with a new set of questions to encourage increased mastery, and automatic grading with feedback to student upon submission.

The textbook’s free website is also available to students and instructors. Instructors have access to additional teaching resources for use in the class. The Instructor’s Manual is available paper copy or electronic form from the web site. The extensive Instructor’s Manual with its lecture topics and classroom activities is very beneficial for all instructors but especially for new instructors who are developing their teaching repertoire. There is never a problem with having enough to do in the classroom or online with this instructors manual at hand for quick access in paper or electronic form.

Students seem to like and report benefitting from the streaming videos in my online courses. The video clips also provide much material for discussion forums.

The instructor’s manual, the Psych Portal web site with its videos and testing program, plus the quality of the textbook are the primary reasons I recommend Exploring Psychology as the first choice for the Open Course Library. If you adopt this book, you will have access to the Psych Portal web site which has a wealth of instructor resources and videos for students to stream. You will have many topics and students activities to select for your course. The videos are updated occasionally and the current list may be obtained in the Psych Portal web site, Student Video Toolkit. Students can stream only the videos in the Student Toolkit. The Instructor Toolkit has some available that students cannot stream.

**Griggs *Psychology: A Concise Introduction*** has the same advantages for the instructor’s manual, testing program, study aids, and videos through Psych Portal as does Myers’s Exploring Psychology. The primary advantage to the Griggs book is its conciseness, as the title says. It is very good at describing the basic enduring psychology topics in the introductory course. In eBook form with Psych Portal the price in under $30 and the paper copy is $37. This book might be first choice for instructors who desire a more concise, economical textbook to be supplemented with more elaboration on intro psych topics by the instructor in face-to-face classes, written lectures, or videos online. The same resources are available for students and instructors via Psych Portal as described for the Myers Exploring Psychology book above.

**Stangors *Introduction to Psychology*** was published in November 2010. It seems like a good textbook to me with 14 chapters and 500+ pages. The test bank has about 150-200 items per chapter in objective and written formats. The instructor’s manual includes detailed chapter outlines. Power Point slides are available to download with 40-75 slides per chapter. Videos will not be available with the book. The primary advantage to this textbook is cost and Creative Commons licensing that allows any instructor to use and modify it in any way desires as long as the author gets recognition for the textbook. Flat World Knowledge Publishers offer the eBook for free and the paper copy will be around $40. The eBook can also be downloaded by students for whatever use they wish. The Test bank may be converted for use in web-based elearning courses.

**Research, Writing, and Discussion Topic Assignments**

Most modules have one or two topics assigned for students to address. There are three types of assignments included that require written responses:

Research topics that require reviewing several sources about the state of knowledge of a specific topic, synthesizing the information along with the textbook’s related segments, and comparing this “state of knowledge” with the student’s perspective on the topic before doing the assignment. Some topics also ask the student to describe a typical perspective in our society in the topic compared with the research-derived “state of knowledge”. These responses typically require the student to write several hundred words to demonstrate knowledge of the various assigned resources and to address specific questions. I have students submit this work in a Drop Box (or could be email) and other students are not able to see it. The advantage to this is to complicate a student using other student’s work to avoid doing the research. The disadvantage is that students do not get to read each other’s work and learn from the difference between higher quality and lower quality responses.

Discussion forums are used for students write about 200 words or more about the research topic, their reaction to it, and the issues it raises. Each student is required to respond to two other students in a substantive manner to earn points. Additional responses are encouraged, but points are limited to two responses to prevent increasing the relative weight of these replies in the course grade. Modules may have both a research topic and a discussion forum.

Discussion forums are also used when no research topic was assigned, but an issue is raised in the textbook or in the news that lends itself well to thoughtful student interaction about it. Discussing video clips relationship to textbook material is also good use of a discussion forum.

Topics for research and discussion are assigned rather than requiring the student to select the topic. There are very clear advantages to assigning the topic based on my many years of teaching General Psychology in-class and online. Learning objectives for the research topics are:

1. Acquire knowledge about a topic beyond the textbook’s material
2. Access peer-reviewed research literature or highly reliable reports of research to become familiar with the way new knowledge is disseminated.
3. To discern the difference between information from reliable research sources based on our best scientific methods from opinion and persuasive articles based on non-objective sources.
4. Gain experience in synthesizing information from a variety of sources about a specific topic.
5. Gain experience in thinking and writing in an academic manner about controversial topics that may relate to strongly held personal views. This develops the student’s ability to withhold judgment about an issue until the best available information is considered.

To accomplish these objectives consistently for the maximum number of students, I choose topics that I have researched to identify the range of materials available to the student. I avoid topics that do not have sufficient material available to the student to achieve the learning objectives. If the student has access to ProQuest and EBSCO online libraries of periodical literature, many topics will meet these criteria and allow for use of both mass media publications and peer-reviewed research journals. If only Internet web sites are available, the instructor will need to evaluate the quality of available information and how it is best discovered with search terms to aid student success in locating it.

**Chapter Quizzes**

Multiple-choice testing over each required chapter has the potential to assure that each student will read the textbook thoroughly. Having one online chapter quiz the same items for all students invites collaboration and makes it easy for a student to score well using another’s answers without reading the book. Online multiple choice testing is best done with many required quizzes, drawn from a large pool of well-written items that are selected randomly from the pool for each student. Each student gets a different set of quiz items.  
  
Offering only three for four exams for the quarter requires each exam to weigh heavily on the course grade and increases the value in obtaining assistance from another to complete the exam without the student mastering the material.

Timed quizzes may require that the student knows the chapter material well before beginning the quiz. If timed with about 1 ½ minutes per item for the quiz (example: a 30 item quiz is allowed 45 minutes) the student does not have time to read the textbook while taking the quiz, but does have time to locate specific information related to some of the items. Online, un-proctored quizzes will be open-book, open-notes, open Internet, and with friends available. Properly timed quizzes reduce the likelihood of the student scoring well without mastering the chapter material.  
  
Timed, un-proctored multiple-choice quizzes still allow for having a friend take the quiz for the student. This is not totally preventable, but may be discouraged in two ways:

1. Address it directly in the course and emphasize that the course is an opportunity for students do develop their ability to do this type of work well. Letting others do the work for the student will lead to greater difficulties later on in the student’s academic career. This course will increase the student’s academic skills only if the student works diligently on the assignments.
2. Make chapter quizzes count heavily toward the course grade as a whole (example: 50% of the course total points) but each quiz weighs little I overall grade (example: 50% of grade contributed by 15 quizzes is about 3% per quiz). Having many quizzes that need 30-45 minutes of one’s time, with each contributing a small amount to the course grade, requires that another individual will have to commit a lot of personal time to take enough quizzes to significantly improve the course grade. This does not prevent the cheating from occurring, but it reduces the incidence by making it very inconvenient to accomplish.

Allowing multiple attempts for each chapter quiz, and retaining only the last score submitted, encourages students to re-read the chapter to increase mastery after each quiz. It is important to retain only the last quiz score to avoid students re-taking the quiz like a gambler, hoping for a lucky score.

Allowing students to receive immediate scores, correct answers, and textbook page references aids student learning by encouraging immediate review in hopes learning how to better read the textbook and the quiz items in order to answer the next quiz items more successfully. Knowing that the next quiz will have new items, but by chance may have a few of the same items as the current quiz, increases motivation to learn the correct answers.

**Video Resources**

**Lecture videos for streaming**

* Discovering Psychology telecourse series at Annenberg Media Learner.org web site at: <http://www.learner.org/resources/series138.html>
* Yale University Open Courses: Introduction to Psychology with Professor Paul Bloom at: <http://oyc.yale.edu/psychology/introduction-to-psychology>

**Textbook chapter related videos, exercises and study aids**

The Myers and Griggs textbooks offer access to Psych Portal web site that accompanies the eBook purchase listed for this course. Psych Portal is a valuable primary resource for the course. Each instructor can tailor the use of these resources to fit the course design. Discussion Forums can be used each week for students to describe their understanding and reactions to the activities which include the following components:

* Over 100 video clips of 5-10 minutes in length for streaming, organized by both topic and chapter through Psych Portal. They are updated periodically; the web site should be accessed to check for new resources each course term.
* Numerous study aids and interactive demonstrations organized by topic or chapter.
* Practice quizzes for each chapter with multiple choice questions similar to those in the Test Bank.
* Interactive topics, exercises, and study aids for each textbook chapter that illustrate concepts.
* The Myers Exploring Psychology Psych Portal includes the eBook with links to each of these resources embedded in the eBook chapters. The Griggs textbook is on CourseSmart and does not have these resources embedded in it, but they are all available in the books Psych Portal website.

The Stangor *Introduction to Psychology* textbook web site includes the eBook, test bank, Instructor’s Manual, and Powerpoint slides. No videos accompany the textbook, although I have listed several video and audio resources in the Modules that can be incorporated into each chapter.

*Scientific American Frontiers* broadcast on PBS for over 20 years has many short video clips related to psychology. Past shows are available for streaming at: <http://www.pbs.org/saf/> . Some are listed with the module resources. PBS is still creating new episodes (as of May 2011).

National Public Radio (NPR) <http://www.npr.org/> and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) <http://www.pbs.org/> offer many psychology related and audio and video programs. Some are listed in each Module. They are continuously updated on NPR. The web site supports searching by topic.

Annenberg Media’s Learner.Org offers the Discovering Psychology telecourse series listed under lecture videos, and the following General Psychology related videos: The Brain (1999) and The Mind (2001) video clips are listed within Module resources where I have found them still to be relevant. <http://www.learner.org/resources/browse.html>